

Speaking to the soul



Special gift

God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams. Daniel 1:17

The book of Daniel transports us to the time when Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, invaded Judah and took thousands of its residents into exile. This happened in the 6th century BC. God had clearly prophesied that this would happen if the people failed to obey him, and Babylon's victory was utterly humiliating. To be dragged hundreds of miles away to a completely unfamiliar place and culture represented Judah's total failure. However, King Nebuchadnezzar recognised that amid the exiles were some very gifted young men. He chose four of them who were strong, healthy, and good-looking, and trained them up for service in the royal palace. They were Daniel and his three friends, who we know best by their Babylonian names: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

The four exiles clearly fitted well into their new life. They had an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. We also learn that God gave Daniel the special gift of interpreting dreams. It wasn't an innate ability or a skill that he had acquired through doing extensive reading. God gave him the gift, and the outcome was transformative for the exiles and for the future history of God's people.

This isn't just an ancient story of how God worked long ago. Today, God gives gifts to the right people to do his work. Sometimes the gifts we are given are closely related to our natural abilities, but often they are not. He gives gifts of caring, speaking his word, administration, healing, listening and prophesying. Our need is to be open to receive God's

gifts, however big a surprise they may be to us. When we receive them and start using them, we need to remember that they aren't the result of our own personal brilliance, but a gift from God, who deserves all the praise.

QUESTION

What special gift has God given you, and how are you going to use it today?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for your generosity and love. Help me to treasure every gift that you have given to me. Amen

Photo - The strand at Portstewart with the estuary of the River Bann and a difficult strip for those playing the golf course. The strand was recently recognised by the Times of London as the best in these islands.

